

"corresponding item" is a replacement item with a different identifier and/or from a different vendor or source (see e.g., specification at page 29, lines 20-28; page 20, line 18 through page 21, line 18). It is respectfully submitted that the invention, as now claimed, would not have been obvious in view of the art cited. The reasons are as follows:

The primary reference cited by the Examiner, King, Jr. et al. ("King"), is unlike Applicants' invention. King discloses a Public Catalog which acts as the repository for supplier-selected information downloaded from the Master Catalog. See e.g. col. 3 line 61 - col. 4, line 14. Similarly, the Private Catalog of King appears to be a subset of supplier-specific information for a particular customer. See e.g., col. 4, lines 15-32.

Applicants' claimed invention permits ⁶access to complete catalogs, and multiple catalogs from a single source or multiple sources. See e.g., specification at page 8. The catalogs may be specific or general, segmented into subcatalogs or whole, all to provide flexibility to the customer.

With Applicants' claimed invention, customers have the capability of selecting particular catalogs (or subcatalogs) they wish to search, and the ability to search among all selected catalogs with a single query. See e.g., specification at page 19, lines 15-19. This represents a distinct advantage over the teaching of King where the customer appears to be limited to searching the Private Catalog or the Public Catalog, with no option of choosing to search both, or choosing to search selected portions only, or choosing to search multiple catalogs at the same time.

In Applicants' invention, the list generated from a query may contain matching items from the various selected

catalogs. An advantage of Applicants' claimed invention is its ability to assign those selected items to separate purchase orders. King does not teach or suggest this advantage. Rather, it appears from King that purchase orders are generated on an item-by-item basis, without the ability to manage a multi-line requisition and still direct different purchase orders to different suppliers. See e.g., col. 5, line 40 - col. 6, line 15. While the Examiner contends that Dworkin teaches multiple purchase orders (Office Action at pp. 6-7), neither Dworkin alone, nor in combination with King, teaches or suggests the ability to manage a multi-line requisition and then direct multiple purchase orders to different suppliers.

Beginning at page 5 of the Office Action, the examiner cites Appendix IV of the Geier reference as describing a multi-line requisition. Appendix IV, however, is merely a listing of prior orders for the same product. Thus, Geier's list of previous orders does not teach or suggest the multi-product, multi-line requisition of Applicants' invention.

Applicants' invention also includes the capability of checking the applicable price and/or availability of selected items prior to generating the various purchase orders. This advantage is neither taught nor suggested by the cited references. Applicants claimed invention, with the capability of checking availability at different inventory locations, permits separating a multi-line requisition into separate orders for products available at different locations, from the same or different vendors.

Applicants also claim a system and method whereby a selected item may be ordered from a alternative supplier by cross-referencing the suppliers' respective catalog numbers (or other identifier). This feature is particularly useful in

connection with the price/availability check. Unlike the system disclosed in King, purchase orders need not be generated for out-of-stock items at one supplier when another supplier has the items in inventory. The capability of cross-referencing among various suppliers' products gives the customer the flexibility to choose one supplier (or supplier location) over another, whether it be for better pricing, availability, delivery, or other criteria.

New claims 79 through 129 better define these particular advantages of Applicants' invention.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's view that those having ordinary skill in the art would have combined the teachings of Dworkin and/or Geier with King. The Examiner cites Dworkin because "King does not disclose a teaching of entering product information that at least partially describes at least one item." See e.g., Office Action at 2. The Examiner cites Geier claiming that it teaches the use of catalog numbers (e.g., Office Action at 3) and generating an order list (e.g., Office Action at 5).

Notably, however, King did not adopt these presumably obvious features when given the chance. As the Examiner will note from the King reference, both Dworkin and Geier were cited during the prosecution of the King patent. Yet surprisingly, despite the fact that the assignee of the King patent is a sophisticated multi-billion dollar company, King never combined the above features in the claims of the patent. If the features allegedly disclosed in the Dworkin and Geier references would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art, why were they not obvious to King even when those precise references were a part of the prosecution?

At page 9 of the Office Action, the Examiner likens an aspect of Applicants' invention to "a shopping cart in a grocery store". Under such a scenario, the distinct advantages of Applicants' invention would include 1) the capability of shopping in many stores at once; 2) not having to push the cart up and down the aisles of the various stores looking for items -- they are retrieved and brought to the customer; 3) being able to select from among comparable items at different stores based on price, availability, or some other criteria; and 4) being able to purchase all of the selected items from desired sources without having to wait in the check-out line at each of the stores.

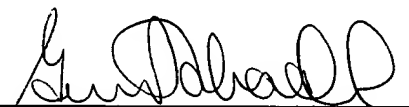
The advantages of Applicants' invention, as set forth in the accompanying claims, are neither taught nor suggested by the art of record. Applicants believe that the above claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's prompt and favorable consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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Art Unit 2761

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Effective November 16, 1997, the Examiner handling this application will be assigned to a new Art Unit as a result of the consolidation into Technology Center 2700. See the forthcoming Official Gazette notice dated November 11, 1997 For any written or facsimile communication submitted **ON OR AFTER** November 16, 1997, this Examiner, who was assigned to Art Unit 2414, will be assigned to Art Unit 2761. Please include the new Art Unit in the caption or heading of any communication submitted after the November 16, 1997 date. Your cooperation in this matter will assist in the timely processing of the submission and is appreciated by the Office.